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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage November 20 on Vice President Annette Lu, who pleaded innocent during the first hearing of a corruption trial Monday concerning the allegation that she misused her special allowance funds; on Taiwan's UN referendum; and on the legislative and presidential elections in 2008. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed the annual report published by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission recently. The editorial called on the United States to be vigilant of China's military threats against Taiwan. End summary.

"Be Vigilant of the Threat against Taiwan Posed by China's Military Rise"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (11/20):

"... It is by no means sensational to say that the military balance across the Taiwan Strait has gradually tipped in favor of China over the past few years. ... Having steadily completed the revamping of its new types of warships, the Chinese military is now capable of engaging in combat operations in the areas near the first island chain, a development that has constituted enormous threats to Taiwan's security.

"In fact, the change in the military situation across the Taiwan Strait can be attributed to two main factors. One factor is that the war on terrorism is now a top priority for the United States, and sustained peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region frees the United States of any worries in other theaters, so that it can focus all its resources on anti-terrorism. Given this new development, Washington needs Beijing's cooperation in order to stabilize the situation in Northeastern Asia. China, in the wake of its rise, also needs the United States' cooperation so as to remove any doubts by the international community about its increasing military buildup. The hostility between the two countries is not as strong as it was before. In addition, the nativist campaign in Taiwan is in high gear now; activities concerning the island's name change, the writing of a new constitution, and Taiwan's UN bid are unfolding like a raging fire. These moves seem to have become an irritant to Washington-Beijing ties and thus brought about disputes between Washington and Taipei. The Bush administration, as a result, decided to put on hold part of its arms sales to Taiwan, such as the F16C/D fighter jets that Taiwan urgently needs. The U.S. government has been sending out signals indicating that it will not consider the deal before the island's presidential election next year.

"To be honest, we should not blame the Bush administration for stalling the arms sales to Taiwan. The major arms procurement package that is essential for Taiwan's military modernization, which was long approved by the Bush administration in 2001, had been constantly blocked and stalled [in the Legislative Yuan] because of

intense political infighting and strife over unification or independence in Taiwan. ... The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission is an organization established under the U.S. Congress by law. Its recent assessment and recommendations in terms of the cross-Strait situation require close attention by the U.S. government. China's attempts at bellicosity and its Anti-Secession Law have all indicated that its threat against Taiwan is neither a gesture nor a bluff; instead, China is in the process of attaining sufficient capabilities to invade Taiwan. ..."

YOUNG